# Motivation towards Learning English of Thai Political Science Undergraduate Students: A Survey Study

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#### **Abstract**

Motivation plays a central role in the language learning process because it drives an individual to start taking action and maintain his or her progress. This study aims to survey the motivation level of political science undergraduate students towards learning English and identify whether the students are primarily integratively motivated or instrumentally motivated to learn the English language. A total of 160 political science undergraduate students were chosen using the stratified sampling method to complete an online selfadministered questionnaire adapted from Gardner's (1985) Attitude/Motivation Test Battery and Prapphal's (1981) Attitude Testing. In addition, they were requested to answer one open-ended question on the importance of learning English for their lives. The quantitative data was analysed using descriptive statistics and the open-ended answers were categorised into two main themes: instrumental motivation and integrative motivation. The results show that the students were very highly motivated towards learning English. Despite the high scores in both types, students were predominantly instrumentally motivated towards learning English. It was also found that women were generally more motivated than men. Based upon the study's outcomes, some significant implications are discussed.

**Keywords**: English learning, Gender and language learning, Motivation, Political science students

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#### บทคัดย่อ

แรงจูงใจนับเป็นสิ่งสำคัญอย่างยิ่งยวดในการเรียนภาษาทั้งนี้ก็เพราะว่าแรงจูงใจเป็นเครื่องผลักดันให้ปัจเจกบุคคลเกิด
กระบวนการเริ่มดันและช่วยประคับประคองกระบวนการพัฒนางานศึกษาขึ้นนี้มุ่งสำรวจระคับแรงจูงใจของนักศึกษาคณะรัฐศาสตร์ระคับ
ปริญญาบัณฑิตต่อการเรียนภาษาอังกฤษและพิสูจน์ว่านักศึกษาคณะรัฐสาสตร์ระคับปริญญาบัณฑิตนั้นมีแรงจูงใจเชิงบูรณาการ
(integrative motivation) หรือแรงจูงใจเชิงแค่รื่องมือ(instrumental motivation) มากกว่ากันนักศึกษาจำนวน๑๖๐คน
ใค้รับการคัดเลือกโดยวิธีการแบ่งขั้นภูมิ(stratified sampling) เพื่อทำแบบสอบถามออนไลน์ซึ่งคัดแแปลงมาจากแบบทดสอบของ
การ์เนอร์(๑๕๕๕) และของกาญจนาปราบพาล(๑๕๕๑) และตอบคำถามปลายเปิดจำนวน๑ข้อเกี่ยวกับความสำคัญของการเรียน
ภาษาอังกฤษต่อชีวิตข้อมูลเชิงปริมาณถูกคำนวณด้วยสถิติเชิงพรรณาและข้อมูลเชิงคุณภาพถูกประมวลด้วยการจัดประเภทตามชนิดของ
แรงจูงใจผลลัพธ์ที่ได้จากการศึกษาซื้ให้เห็นว่าระดับแรงจูงใจของนักศึกษาคณะรัฐศาสตร์ระดับปริญญาบัณฑิตอยู่ในระดับที่สูงมาก
โดยเฉพาะแรงจูงใจเชิงเครื่องมือที่มีบทบาทมากกว่าแรงจูงใจเชิงบูรณาการผลลัพธ์นี้สอดคล้องกับผลลัพธ์ของผลการศึกษาก่อนหน้า
ส่วนมากนอกจากนี้ยังพบว่านักศึกษาเพศหญิงมีแรงจูงใจในการเรียนภาษาอังกฤษมากกว่าเพศชายผลการศึกษาแสดงให้เห็นถึงช่องทางและ
คำแนะนำในการพัฒนาแรงจูงใจของนักศึกษาต่อการเรียนภาษาอังกฤษในภายภาคหน้าต่อไป

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#### 1. Introduction

In the globalised era, people from diverse backgrounds are increasingly required to use a common means of communication that is understandable among all interlocutors (Bilbao-Osario, Dutta & Lanvin, 2013). It is widely accepted that in the current age, English serves as a global and highly powerful common language, with around 375 million English as a first language speakers and twice as many English as a second language speakers (Reddy, 2016). Moreover, English is universally used in a variety of realms, such as education, business, technology, and government (Nunan, 2003). As a result, learning English has become the norm in most countries since learners believe that English is the key to a better education and more career opportunities (Mahu, 2012).

In light of the above, various studies have been carried out around the world to investigate the motivation of English learners. This is primarily because motivation is regarded as a crucial factor that drives learners to start the initial process of learning and then maintain it (Chumcharoensuk, 2013). Nevertheless, little research has been undertaken to examine the motivation of political science students towards learning English. This research was thus conducted on the hope that it will produce three beneficial outcomes. Firstly, the students' answers should reveal their motivational stance towards English language. This may help the respondents develop individual approaches to English learning, which should enable them to reach their highest potential. Secondly, the findings will provide useful guidelines for the concerned administrators in the Faculty of Political Science, the Language Institute and the Faculty of Arts pertaining to the development of curricula and strategies to enhance the quality of learning and teaching. And thirdly, this research can be used as a database for further studies.

#### 1.1 Research Questions

There were two research questions for this study.

Research Question 1 (RQ1): What is the level of motivation amongst the political science students towards learning English?

Research Question 2 (RQ2): Are the political science students predominantly integratively or instrumentally motivated towards learning English?

## 1.2 Objectives of the Study

There were two objectives for this study.

Objective 1: To survey the motivational level of political science students towards learning English

Objective 2: To identify whether the political science students are primarily integratively motivated or instrumentally motivated to learn English language

## 1.3 Conceptual Framework of the Study

Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual framework of this study.

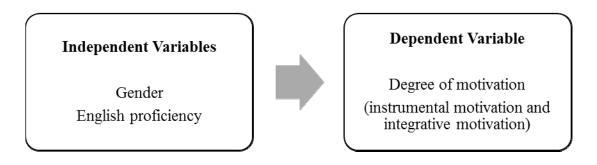


Figure 1: Conceptual framework of the study

In the context of this study, the conceptual framework illustrates the cause-effect relationship between the two independent variables – the gender and English proficiency of the respondents – and the dependent variable, that is, the degree of motivation. It was hypothesised that gender and English proficiency affect the degree of participants' instrumental and integrative motivation towards learning English.

#### 2. Review of Literature

This section presents the review of literature. It begins with a review of motivation types followed by a review of related previous studies.

## 2.1 Motivation Types: Instrumental Motivation – Integrative Motivation

According to Gardner (2001), two major types of motivation play a vital role in driving a static individual to start learning a language, namely, integrative motivation and instrumental motivation. The first type of motivation – integrative motivation – indicates that learners begin to learn a target language because they are genuinely interested in integration with, or becoming more socially connected to, the group who speaks that language. On the contrary, the second type of motivation – instrumental motivation – does not take into account the social dimensions of learning a language such as involvement with or a feeling of closeness with the group of speakers; instead, learners are motivated to learn the target language because they focus on practical outcomes such as getting a better job or the pursuit of higher education. Gardner's theory has become popular among psycholinguistic scholars who aim to scrutinise the motivation of individuals towards language learning.

Although there is a clear distinction between the two types of motivation as proposed by Gardner above, Hayamizu (1997) posits that they are not mutually exclusive. A language learner can possess both types of motivation simultaneously, albeit at differing degrees.

## 2.2 Previous Studies on Motivation towards English Learning

In a Thai context, research in this field can be found in various publications. Nuchnoi's (2008) study on the motivation of English major undergraduate students showed that students' motivation towards English was primarily instrumental. Their high degree of instrumental motivation was mainly related to passing their English courses and getting good grades. Kitjaroonchai and Kitjaroonchai (2012) similarly found that even though Thai students who studied at Asia-Pacific International University had high levels of both types of motivation towards learning English, their instrumental motivation was found to be fairly higher than the integrative type. From a comparative perspective, Chumcharoensuk (2013) determined that Thai students majoring in English were instrumentally motivated to learn English. These findings are in line with the consensus view that students majoring in English are predominantly instrumentally motivated to learn English.

Oranpattanachai (2008) surveyed Thai engineering students and discovered that while integrative motivation contributed significantly to their motivation, it was outweighed by instrumental motivation. Hengsadeekul, Koul and Kaewkuekool (2014) collected data from undergraduate students from various fields of study, determining that most students were instrumentally motivated regardless of their primary discipline. In a similar vein, Choomthong and Chaichompoo (2015) found that first-year undergraduate students were instrumentally motivated to a slightly higher degree than integratively motivated.

In similar fashion, research in a non-Thai context has produced kindred findings. For instance, Lai (1999) concluded that the motivation of Asian students to learn English is predominantly instrumental. She found that Hong Kong undergraduate students, regardless

of their discipline, took English language courses based chiefly upon instrumental reasons – career preparation in particular. Similarly, Mun (2011) conducted a survey of Chinese undergraduate students to determine the leading type of motivation, finding that instrumental reasons seemed to prevail over an integrative orientation. Similar findings have emerged from the work of other researchers such as Kobayashi (2002) in Japan and Ahmadi (2011) in Iran.

It is worth mentioning that some research has contrasted sharply with the aforementioned work. That is to say, the results of some previous studies have shown integrative motivation to be more important than instrumental motivation. Degang (2010) reported that, notwithstanding the close outcomes, students majoring in business English had stronger integrative motivation than instrumental motivation. Likewise, the work of Nahavandi and Mukundan (2013) surveying nearly 600 engineering students revealed that integrative motivation was significantly more important than instrumental orientation. By the same token, a recent study by Duverney (2007) suggested that the spread of Western culture plays a significant role in driving Koreans to learn English.

# 3. Research Methodology

This section presents the research methodology used in this study.

#### 3.1 Research Sample

The quantitative design was used to address the objectives of this study. The research was conducted in the Faculty of Political Science at a distinguished Thai university. From the total population of 973, 160 students were chosen by stratified sampling method to complete the online self-administered questionnaire. Because the faculty is composed of four departments with virtually the same number of students, namely, the Government Department (GOV), International Relations Department (IR), Sociology and Anthropology Department (SOC) and Public Administration Department (PA), 40 students from each department and 10 students from each year of study were equally chosen to represent their respective arrays. Moreover, to ensure gender equality, an equal number of male and female participants were chosen.

## 3.2 Research Instrument

The research instrument for this study was a questionnaire adapted from Gardner's (1985) Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) and Prapphal's (1981) Attitude Testing along with the following open-ended question: How important is learning English for your life? The researcher made some grammatical and structural changes to the working questionnaire to distinguish it from the original ones and had it validated by two experts in the field prior to first use. All of the questions in the adapted questionnaire began with "Learning English is important because ..." This encouraged the respondents to answer each question based on their perspective. The questionnaire was composed of two parts. In the first part, all participants were asked to provide general demographic information,

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including their name, age, gender and academic background. In the second part, 20 close-ended questions were provided to determine the role of instrumental motivation and integrative motivation in learning English. Questions in the second part of the questionnaire were randomly arranged between both types of motivation. Examples of questions regarding instrumental motivation are (1) no.1: Learning English is important because it enables me to get a good grade; (2) no.3: Learning English is important because it enables me to get a good job; and (3) no.7: Learning English is important because it enables me to be educated. Meanwhile, some of the questions regarding integrative motivation are (1) no.2 Learning English is important because it enables me to express my feelings more openly like English-speaking people do; (2) no.4: Learning English is important because it enables me to live as independently as English-speaking people do; and (3) no. 14: Learning English is important because it will help me keep in touch with English-speaking foreign friends. The participants were required to rate their feelings based upon a five-point Likert (1932) scale as shown in Table 1.

Scale Mean Range Motivational **Score Range** Level 5 Very High Strongly Agree 4.21 - 5.004 Agree High 3.41 - 4.203 Moderate Average 2.61 - 3.402 Disagree Low 1.81 - 2.60

1.00 - 1.80

Table 1: Interpretation of Scoring Results in Terms of Motivational Level

Strongly Disagree

The open-ended question asked for the participants' comments and suggestions regarding the importance of learning English for their lives. The participants were required to write their answers in the space provided.

Very Low

#### 3.3 Data Analysis

1

Descriptive statistics were used to analyse the level of participants' motivation through the Microsoft Excel programme. The results were interpreted and categorised, and are displayed in the form of tables. For the open-ended question, the data was analysed using a thematic approach, that is, the information was categorised in either the instrumental category or integrative category depending on the participants' answers.

## 4. Research Findings

The research findings address the aforementioned aims of the study and the comparison between the groups of respondents upon different benchmarks.

## 4.1 Results from an Overall Perspective

Table 2, 3 and 4 display the overall motivation of the political science undergraduate students towards learning English, respondents' means score of instrumental motivation and respondents' means score of integrative motivation, respectively.

Table 2: Respondents' mean scores of overall motivation

Type of Mean Score	Mean	S.D.	Meaning
<b>Overall Motivation level</b>	4.24	0.88	Very High

Table 3: Respondents' means score of instrumental motivation

No.	Statement	Mean	S.D.	Meaning
1	Learning English is important because it enables me to get a good grade.	4.04	0.88	High
3	Learning English is important because it enables me to get a good job.	4.76	0.46	Very High
5	Learning English is important because it enables me to be more socially respected.	3.68	1.02	High
7	Learning English is important because it enables me to be educated.	4.47	0.69	Very High
9	Learning English is important because it enables me to achieve greater success in life.	4.34	0.75	Very High
11	Learning English is important because it enables me to earn a higher salary/wage.	4.46	0.65	Very High
13	Learning English is important because it enables me to advance in my career.	4.53	0.61	Very High
15	Learning English is important because it provides a great number of opportunities in life.	4.56	0.65	Very high
17	Learning English is important because it enables me to have better living conditions.	4.04	0.85	High
19	Learning English is important because it enables me to study abroad.	4.49	0.79	Very High
	$\bar{\mathbf{X}}$	4.34	0.81	Very High

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Table 4: Respondents' means scores of integrative motivation

No.	Statement	Mean	S.D.	Meaning
2	Learning in English is important because it enables me to express my feelings more openly like English-speaking people do.	4.10	0.88	High
4	Learning English is important because it enables me to live as independently as English-speaking people do.	3.71	1.04	High
6	Learning English is important because it gives me access to wider knowledge sources, e.g. newspapers and journals.	4.71	0.62	Very High
8	Learning English is important because it enables me to appreciate English arts and literature.	3.91	0.99	High
10	Learning English is important because it enables me to think critically.	3.50	1.05	High
12	Learning English is important because it will help me understand when native speakers speak English.	4.56	0.69	Very High
14	Learning English is important because it will help me keep in touch with English-speaking foreign friends.	4.11	0.91	High
16	Learning English is important because it enables me to share my knowledge and experiences with other people, e.g. presenting ideas in English or giving directions in English.	4.32	0.80	Very High
18	Learning English is important because it enables me to understand the cultures of the English-speaking countries.	4.09	0.88	High
20	I want to speak English fluently in order to live in English-speaking communities/societies.	4.40	0.81	Very High
	X	4.14	0.94	High

The results show that the undergraduate political science students were very highly motivated towards learning English, as their average score was over 4.20 points. In addition, when looking closer at the types of motivation, it can be concluded that the respondents are predominantly instrumentally motivated to learn English with average scores for instrumental motivation and integrative motivation at 4.34 and 4.14 points, respectively.

In terms of instrumental motivation, as shown in Table 3, getting a good job (statement 3), having opportunities in life (statement 15) and the opportunity for career advancement (statement 13) were the top three most important reasons for learning English, with scores of 4.76, 4.56 and 4.53, respectively. However, the participants agreed, at a much lesser extent, that English makes them socially respected with a score of 3.68 points out of five for statement 5.

In terms of integrative motivation, as shown in Table 4, the participants indicated that access to wider knowledge sources (statement 6) with 4.71 points, and the ability to understand English native speakers (statement 12) with 4.56 points, were the two utmost priorities in learning English. On the contrary, the respondents rated the importance of English as a means to helping them think critically (statement 10) at only 3.5, indicating that this factor was least important among all the integrative items.

## 4.2 Results from a Comparative Perspective

The variables used as the standard for comparison were gender and English proficiency. Table 5 compares the motivation levels of the male and female participants in regard to overall motivation, instrumental motivation and integrative motivation.

Table 5: Comparison between integrative motivation and instrumental motivation
classified by gender

<b>Type of Mean Score</b>	Mean	S.D.	Meaning		
Overall Motivation					
Female's overall motivation	4.28	0.86	Very High		
Male's overall motivation	4.20	0.90	High		
Instrumental Motivation					
Female's average	4.37	0.80	Very High		
instrumental motivation					
Male's average	4.30	0.81	Very High		
instrumental					
motivation					
Integrative Motivation					
Female's average	4.19	0.81	High		
integrative					
motivation					
Male's average integrative	4.09	0.97	High		
motivation					

According to Table 5, female's overall motivation, average instrumental motivation and average integrative motivation towards learning English were all higher than those of their male counterparts. Although they had similar motivation levels in the instrumental

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motivation and integrative motivation categories, the female respondents seem to have higher motivation to learn English than the males.

Table 6 compares the motivation of participants based on command of English in three dimensions: overall motivation, instrumental motivation and integrative motivation. Respondents were divided into four tiers depending on their Chulalongkorn University Test of English Proficiency (CU-TEP) score. Respondents with scores between 14-34 were grouped in Tier 1; respondents with scores between 35-69 were grouped in Tier 2; respondents with scores between 70-98 were grouped in Tier 3; respondents with scores of 99 or above were grouped in Tier 4.

Table 6: Comparison between integrative motivation and instrumental motivation classified by English proficiency

Type of Mean Score	Mean	S.D.	Meaning	
Overall Motivation				
Tier 1's overall motivation	3.97	0.41	High	
Tier 2's overall motivation	4.15	0.89	High	
Tier 3's overall motivation	4.31	0.88	Very High	
Tier 4's overall motivation	4.25	0.97	Very High	
<b>Instrumental Motivation</b>				
Tier 1's average instrumental motivation	4.07	0.45	High	
Tier 2's average instrumental motivation	4.27	0.83	Very High	
Tier 3's average instrumental motivation	4.42	0.77	Very High	
Tier 4's average instrumental motivation	4.26	0.94	Very High	
Integrative Motivation				
Tier 1's average integrative motivation	3.87	0.36	High	
Tier 2's average integrative motivation	4.02	0.92	High	
Tier 3's average integrative motivation	4.20	0.96	High	
Tier 4's average integrative motivation	4.23	1.00	Very High	

Table 6 clearly shows that students with better English proficiency had higher integrative motivation. It can be seen that the Tier 1 respondents scored only 3.87 points for integrative motivation. The points rose slightly for each tier, with Tier 4 students being the only group that had very high integrative motivation towards learning English. Tier 3 students had much higher scores for instrumental motivation than Tier 4 students, but had lower overall motivation. Thus, it can be concluded that Tier 3 students are the most motivated students among all, followed by Tier 4 participants. Tier 2 students came in third while Tier 1 students can be considered the least motivated English learners.

## 4.3 Results from the Open-ended Question

In addition to the compulsory close-ended questions, the respondents were also asked to provide an answer to an open-ended question on the importance of learning English for their lives. The answers were divided into two themes, which are instrumental motivation and integrative motivation.

For the instrumental motivation, three of the most commonly given reasons were (1) enabling them to get high-paid jobs or providing career opportunities; (2) enabling them to gain admission to postgraduate schools where English is the medium of instruction; and (3) enabling them to travel abroad. Examples of answers from the respondents are as follows<sup>1</sup>:

"Learning English helps you to pursue your career easier also allow you to understand this world better compared to the ones who did not." (respondent 63)

"For me, learning English is important in terms of earning a job advancement. The higher English skill, the greater chance in a high salary job." (respondent 97)

"Learning English is important to me because I want to study abroad and I want to join careers that English skill is very necessary and nowadays most countries around the world learn and use English language..." (respondent 100)

"If I knew better in English more than other people, it will give me a good chance to get a good job and high wage." (respondent 125)

For the integrative motivation, the attitude that English was important to their lives because English could enable them to communicate with the people around the world was accepted by the majority of the participants. Respondent number 19 posited that "It is very essential for everyone in this world because nowadays, globalization came in and communication is so important." Apart this participant, other respondents accepted the importance of learning English in the same way, as follows:

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup>The answers to the open-ended question are shown in the same way they were written by the respondents and may contain grammatical and/or spelling errors.

"We cannot deny that English is universal language which is used worldwide. Therefore, there is no reason why we should not take every opportunity when it comes to advancing our English skills as being parts of the global community." (respondent 33)

"It is crucial nowadays as communication skills in foreign language is vital to any aspect of our life. Learning English or any other language should be considered as mandatory, not optional." (respondent 46)

"Current age is the age of globalization. International communication emerges more. Sometimes that information is not translated into Thai. I have to work with foreigners and they are my friends." (respondent 129)

#### 5. Discussion and Conclusion

This section discusses the results from the previous section in answer to the research questions. Research question 1 can be answered based on the evidence in Table 2 showing that the respondents were very highly motivated learners of English. Research question 2 can be answered through the comparison between the average scores of each motivation type. Table 3 illustrates that the participants had very high instrumental motivation towards learning English (4.34 points); at the same time, Table 4 reveals that they had merely high integrative motivation (4.14 points). Consequently, it can be concluded that the political science undergraduate students are predominantly instrumentally motivated towards learning English.

## 5.1 Gender and Motivation to Learn English

Gender is another issue worthy of discussion. The findings of this study indicate that female students are more motivated than their male counterparts in all aspects. Female respondents were found to be very highly motivated towards learning English in the overall motivation and instrumental motivation categories, while males were only highly motivated with respect to instrumental drives. In the aspect of gender and motivation to learn English, the findings of this study are in agreement with previous studies by Kobayahi (2002), Ahmadi (2011), Nahavadi and Mukundan (2013) and Hengsadeekul, Koul and Kaewkuekool (2014). Interestingly, in answering the open-ended question, only female respondents took the social aspect of prospective partners such as English native speaker boyfriends or husbands into consideration. Males, on the other hand, were the only gender that mentioned online games as an important motivation to learn English.

## 5.2 English Proficiency and Motivation to Learn English

The results of the comparison between the respondents with different levels of English proficiency are less conclusive. Although students with higher CU-TEP scores do not seem to have higher instrumental and overall motivation towards learning English, the level of integrative motivation does seem to correspond to their level of English proficiency. Students with higher CU-TEP scores seem to be more eager to get involved in English-speaking communities and cultures; moreover, the Tier 4 students were the only group that had high integrative motivation towards learning English.

To summarise, the findings of this study accord with the majority of the previous work. This study also affirms the conclusion that most students, regardless of study area, are more motivated to learn English if they know it can help them achieve pragmatic outcomes including getting a high-paid job or gaining admission to overseas academic institutions.

#### 5.3 Limitations of This Study

The findings of this study specifically reflect the motivation of a certain group of participants, i.e. 160 political science undergraduate students at a distinguished Thai university. Consequently, the results do not represent, nor can they be generalised, to other groups of students, especially those in different disciplines. Likewise, the questions in the survey may not have covered all the factors related to motivation.

## 5.4 Recommendations for Further Study

Based on the findings and conclusion of this study, the following recommendations are made for further study.

- 1. This study focused only on political science undergraduate students. There should be other investigations carried out with students from different levels or fields of study, since they may produce different outcomes.
- 2. This study surveyed 160 students. Further studies should be done with a larger sample size. The subjects could be current students or fresh graduates.
- 3. This study only looked at English learning. Further studies should be done on different languages such as French, Mandarin Chinese, Japanese or Spanish, which are also widely used foreign languages.
- 4. This study did not take into account environmental factors such as family, community or income level. Further studies may bring such factors into consideration, which may yield different results.
- 5. This study employed the survey method of study. Further studies should use qualitative methods of study, for example, interviews, in order to obtain more indepth information.

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